

ICHABOD!

Josephus reports (*Ant.* XVII. vi. 5, *War* I. xxxiii. 33) that when Herod realized that he was on his death-bed, he had all the Jewish leaders gathered together in the hippodrome at Jericho under strict military guard and ordered that, as he breathed his last, they should to the last man be put to the sword. He said grimly that he would be accompanied to the grave by universal mourning, because of him, if not for him. Through the efforts of Salome, his sister, who had stood by him through thick and thin, and Archelaus, his chief heir, the order was countermanded.

If the story is true, as it may well be, it can be explained by Herod's madness due to the pain of his disease-racked body. It could, however, be that he had realized the shortcomings of Archelaus, who had become his successor designate only because so many of his other sons had over the years been bloodily eliminated, and because he knew that only by terror would his son be able to maintain his position. In his will he had left him only Judea with Idumea and Samaria, while he had divided the rest of his kingdom between Philip and Antipater. His will was upheld by Augustus, who, however, refused Archelaus the title of king. He had to be satisfied with that of ethnarch until he had demonstrated his ability to rule. His brothers had to accept that of tetrarch.

Had Herod died only a little later, it is possible that Archelaus might have weathered the storm; it was his dying shortly before the Passover pilgrims were due in Jerusalem that was fatal for his son. At the funeral feast he was able to win the approval of the men of Jerusalem. With the Passover, however, the Zealots came from Galilee, and they were harder to satisfy. They demanded harsh measures against Herod's advisers and the deposition of the High Priest. Archelaus felt, probably wisely, that he had to refuse. In the ensuing riot some three thousand were killed in the Temple. The people were so stunned by this that Archelaus had time to go to Rome to obtain the emperor's ratification of his father's will. Unfortunately the opposition caused by the ambitions of Herod Antipas so delayed Augustus' decision that troubles broke out at home.

These were caused in the first place by the greed of Sabinus and Varus, the procurator and legate of Syria respectively. At Pentecost fighting broke out in Jerusalem, and part of the cloisters round the Court of the Gentiles was burnt down. The Romans took the opportunity to seize the Temple treasure. This was followed by troubles throughout Palestine. Some of the risings were anti-Roman; others, like the seizure of Sepphoris by Judas the Zealot (cf. p. 117), were mainly religious in nature. The trouble is that we owe our information to Josephus (*Ant.* XVII. x. 4-8), who cannot be relied on to give us the true

motivation. Varus was able to impose a semblance of peace but gave a grim warning of the power of Rome by crucifying two thousand of the insurgents.

The arguments going on in Rome were further complicated by a delegation from Jerusalem, which had come by permission of Varus. Josephus tells us that it was joined by eight thousand of the Jews living in Rome (*Ant.* XVII. xi. 1). Their request was that Palestine should become part of the Roman province of Syria, but that they should be allowed to live under their own (religious) laws. The underlying concept was clearly that they should be allowed to revert to the position they had had for so long under the Persians and the Ptolemies, i.e. complete religious and cultural autonomy under the high-priestly supervision, cf. p. 95. Some, e.g. Oesterley, see the less militant Pharisees behind the delegation, others, e.g. Klausner, the leaders of popular opinion. There can be little doubt, however, that Zeitlin is correct in recognizing it as Sadducean, with Joazar son of Boethus, the High Priest, as its main inspirer. After the recent troubles Pharisees would not have welcomed Sadducean rule. Zeitlin explains the support given by the Jews of Rome reasonably enough by their desire not to be suspected of disloyalty to Rome. If the foreign policy of Palestine were completely in Roman hands, they could not be accused of secretly favouring the Parthians.*

Direct Roman Rule

Ten years later this request was granted, when, after a joint complaint by Jews and Samaritans about his rule, Archelaus was deposed by the emperor and sent into exile. Judea and Samaria were constituted a special district under a procurator, who was under the general supervision of the legate of Syria.

It soon became apparent how seriously those behind the delegation had misjudged the situation. In the immediate post-exilic situation under the Persians, once the Davidic house had retreated into obscurity, the high priests were the only legitimate authority within Jewry. The Qumranic schism shows how greatly their position was weakened once the office had been taken over by the Hasmoneans. It was reduced even further, when Herod, Archelaus and then the Romans deposed and appointed high priests to suit their pockets and their policies. While the Romans had no interest in interfering with Jewish religious law, they saw to it that the religious leaders offered no opposition to their demands.

Josephus, trying to put the position in a more favourable light for his Gentile readers, said that the government was an aristocracy ruled by the high priests (*Ant.* XX. x. 5). Zeitlin's commentary on it is quite fair, "The government of Judaea was a combination of timocracy—the love for the ruler—and nomocracy—the rule of law. The high priests who headed the community were lovers of Rome, while the daily life of the people was ruled by the *Bet Din haGadol* and its religious enactments."† In fact, however, if there were a clash of interests, the Roman will would normally triumph.

The subservience of the Sadducean priesthood to the Romans made it ever

* *The Rise and Fall of the Judaean State*, Vol. II, pp. 127f.

† *op. cit.*, p. 139.

more difficult for it to resist the Pharisaic pressure for innovations in the interpretation of the Law. The price the Pharisees had to pay for having their way was some measure of political cooperation with the Sadducean rulers. It was this that made the scandal of the condemnation of Jesus of Nazareth possible. It also alienated the bulk of the people, especially in Galilee, who grew increasingly sympathetic towards the Zealots, who combined observance of the Mosaic Law with a rejection of any and every authority recognized by and recognizing the Romans.

There was an almost immediate indication of what Roman rule involved in practice. The deposition of Archelaus coincided with a census taken by Quirinius in the province of Syria. The Roman attitude was clearly and brutally shown by the inclusion of the semi-independent territories of Philip and Herod Antipas with Judea, now under direct Roman rule. The census raised threefold opposition. It demonstrated firstly in the most obvious way that the Jews were under heathen rule. Then it was clearly realized that the main purpose behind it was taxation, which is never welcomed. Finally it offended deep-rooted Jewish religious susceptibilities. In Judea the opposition was quieted by the high priest (*Ant.* XVIII. i. 1), though Quirinius, in typical Roman fashion, showed his "gratitude" by deposing him. In Galilee Judas, who had seized Sepphoris after Herod's death, but had managed to escape when the Romans turned against him, raised a major revolt, which ended in his death (*Acts* 5 : 37). This was not the census of *Luke* 2 : 1, 2, about which nothing definitive can be said at present in spite of much scholarly investigation and argument.*

In the sixty years between the deposition of Archelaus and the outbreak of the great revolt against Rome (A.D. 66) there was only one short period of nominally Jewish rule in Jerusalem. Herod Agrippa I (*Acts* 12 : 1-23) was a grandson of Herod the Great and brother of Herodias (*Mk.* 6 : 17), who had married first her uncle Herod Philip (not Philip the Tetrarch, but a brother of the same name) and then his half brother Herod Antipas. After a series of almost incredible adventures Agrippa was made king of the tetrarchies that had been ruled by Philip and Lysanias by the emperor Caligula (A.D. 37). Two years later, when Herod Antipas was deposed and exiled, his tetrarchy was added to Antipas' kingdom. Only four years after he had become king, Gaius added Judea and Samaria, so Agrippa found himself king of virtually the whole area ruled by his grandfather. He was able to win the confidence of the Pharisees, whom he favoured at the expense of the Sadducean high priests, who naturally resented their loss of influence. In all probability the Pharisees shut their eyes to the fact that among Gentiles Agrippa behaved virtually as a Gentile. His sudden and premature death in A.D. 44 destroyed the last hope of an even nominally independent Judea, for his son, Herod Agrippa II (*Acts* 25 : 13), was too young to follow him, and the territory he was later to rule was mainly to the north of Palestine. Had the revolt been delayed, it is just possible that he would have been given his father's kingdom. As it was, the whole of Palestine

* The often-heard suggestion that *Luke* was here making a historical confusion overlooks the fact that the strongly Aramaic nature of his first two chapters suggests a story told by eye-witnesses, probably including Mary.

came under direct Roman rule in A.D. 44.

History records the names of fourteen Roman procurators of Judea, seven before Herod Agrippa I, who governed only the centre and south, and seven after him, who governed the whole country. Some of them are known to us by name only—it is striking that the first contemporary mention of Pontius Pilate, outside the New Testament, Philo and Josephus, was found only in 1961 during excavations at Caesarea*—and of none is anything particularly good recorded, and of many much that is positively evil. This is not hard to understand, for Judea was never more than a third-rate district, and the procurators were normally more interested in enriching themselves than in anything else, though normally they tried to keep the peace so as to avoid being recalled by the emperor. The fact is that Rome did not have any large number of really able provincial administrators, and the emperors did not see why they should be wasted on Judea.

The bringing of Galilee under direct Roman rule angered the Zealots, who were strongest there, and increased their general influence. As a result each of the seven procurators during the twenty years before the outbreak of the great revolt had Zealot uprisings to quell. In one of them Alexander, an apostate Jew from a leading Jewish family in Alexandria, put two of the sons of Judas to death (46–48).

The last procurator, Florus, was not merely brutal and venal but also incompetent. We have grounds for thinking that he wanted to goad the Jews to revolt, so that his pickings might be the greater. In August 66 sacrifices for the Roman emperor were discontinued. Florus' mishandling of the situation made any peaceful solution impossible. At first it seemed that the Romans might be thrown out of the land, at least for the time being, but the arrival of Vespasian in the spring of 67 changed the picture almost immediately. Before the end of the year Galilee was in his hands, and by the spring of 68 the western parts of Judea, Idumea and Perea had fallen to him.

Jerusalem was not immediately attacked. This was partly due to Nero's suicide in June; Vespasian wanted to see what would follow, before he involved his forces in the siege of Jerusalem. In addition he knew that events were fighting for him there. In the city and even in the Temple moderates fought nationalists, while the Zealots, divided into three groups, fought one another and all others.

By June 69 the only area left to the insurgents was Jerusalem and the three almost impregnable Herodian fortresses, Herodion, Masada and Machaerus. Vespasian left for Rome to be hailed as emperor and left his son Titus in charge. Shortly before Passover in April 70 Titus appeared before Jerusalem and invested it. The day that many of the fanatics believed could not come had come. The final agony was not to last long, cf. Matt. 24:22. On Aug. 29, the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians (*Tisha b'Av*), the sanctuary was set on fire and destroyed. Within a month the whole city was

* A reproduction of the inscription may be found on Plate XI in F. F. Bruce, *Israel and the Nations*; for a general discussion of the evidence see Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* Vol. I, pp. 383–387, M. Grant, *The Jews in the Roman World*, pp. 99–102.

in Roman hands. With the capture of Masada in April 73 this chapter of Israel's history was finally closed.

Josephus, who was in a good position to know, estimated that a million one hundred thousand Jews had been killed and 97,000 taken away as slaves. Though we have consistently hesitated to accept his figures as exaggerations, here we may rather suspect an underestimate. We must not forget the many older people who died of famine or were put to death by their captors as being useless as slaves. Equally the estimate is not likely to include all who perished in the bitter feuds in Jerusalem itself. In any case two generations had to pass before Palestinian Jewry felt able to challenge the might of Rome for the second and final time.

The crushing of the nationalists, the virtual annihilation of the Zealots and the assassination of the Sadducean leaders meant that the religious leadership now fell almost uncontested into the hands of the more moderate Pharisees. This was further helped by the bloody suppression of Jewish revolts in Egypt and Cyrene, Cyprus and Mesopotamia (115-117) and was sealed by the disaster of Bar Kochba's revolt (132-5). From then on Jewish nationalism became little more than an eschatological hope until little more than a century ago.